GUIDE TO THE SR8 BUSH NEGROES FILE

[The Bush Negroes (also called Refugee Blacks) are the descendants of Black slaves brought as plantation laborers to Surinam mainly from West Africa starting in the last quarter of the 17th century. Many of these slaves escaped to the forests of the interior and formed communities of their own. After a period of strife, they concluded peace treaties with the Dutch colonial officials in the 1760s which enabled them to live an independent existence. They developed distinctive societies reflecting a blending and adaptation to local conditions of various West African sociocultural patterns. Also, their numbers increased markedly in the 18th and 19th centuries, so that the modern Bush Negro population is estimated to total about 25-30,000. For the most part, they live along the rivers of the interior of Surinam, but they seem to be increasingly expanding into adjacent French Guiana (cf. 1: Herskovits and Herskovits, p. vii; 5: Hurault, p. 2; and A.J.F. Kobben, Participation and quantification; field work among the djuka (bush negroes of surinam). In, D.G. Jongmans and P.C.W. Gutkind (eds.), Anthropologists in the field, 1967: 35).

The Bush Negro population is divided into four principal tribes: the Saramacca (Saramaka), the Djuka (Aucaner, Aucaner Auca, Awka), the Boni (Aluku nenge), and the Paramacca (Paramaka). Two or three other small tribes are mentioned in the literature, but very little information is given about them. Thus 6: Hurault (pp. 37, 39, 87) refers to the Bakabuchi, a small tribe in Surinam now presumably extinct, while 2: Kahn (p. 92) lists the Matawaai as a tribe living along the upper Saramacca River, with the Quintee-Matawaai sub-tribe located on the Copenam. The Matawaai may be the same tribe as the one referred to by 3: Coster (p. 7) under the name of Mantoewari; not only are the names similar, but roughly the same location is given in each case.

The Saramacca tribe, formed at the beginning of the 18th century, is the oldest and largest of the Bush Negro tribes. They "are very highly esteemed everywhere, for it is unanimously assumed that their magic is stronger, their techniques more perfected, than those of other tribes" (6: Hurault, p. 465). The Saramacca are located along the

lower Saramacca and upper Surinam rivers (including the Gran Rio and Pikien Rio) in Surinam. Kahn estimated their population as around 14,000 in the 1920s (cf. 1: Herskovits and Herskovits, p. vii; 2: Kahn, p. 92).

The Djuka tribe was evidently formed around 1760, and they are the second largest Bush Negro tribe. Population estimates for the 1950s range from 6,500 to about 8,000. They are located in the region of the upper Maroni (Marowyne) River, which forms the boundary between Surinam and French Guiana. Their main residential or "great" villages are in Surinam along the Tapanahoni River, while impermanent farming villages or camps may be found on both banks of the Maroni and on the islands in the river. Also, Djuka villages coexist with Boni farming villages on the Lawa River downstream from Abattis-Cottica Falls as far as Abounasounga; below the latter the settlements are entirely Djuka. Gradually, they are penetrating more and more deeply into French Guiana (cf. Herskovits and Herskovits, p. vii; 2: Kahn, p. 101; 3: Coster, p. 7; 4: Geijskes, p. 9; 6: Hurault, pp. 5, 13, 19; and Kobben 1967).

During one period of their existence, from 1815 to 1860, the Boni were considered as slaves of the Djuka. The Boni are the only tribe located primarily in French Guiana. Their six "great" villages are found along the middle course of the Lawa, principal tributary of the Maroni, upstream from Abattis-Cottica Falls. Their farming villages coexist with Djuka villages below the falls as far as Abounasounga, and there are three more recently founded small villages on the lower course of the Maroni. Hurault estimates their population as about 800 to 1,000 in the 1950s (cf. Hurault, pp. 1-2; 6: Hurault, pp. 4, 13, 19, 292).

The Paramacca occupy the lower part of the Maroni from the first waterfall (Hermina) to the junction with Beiman Creek. Population estimates in the 1950s range from 700 to 1,700 (cf. 4: Geijskes, p. 9; 6: Hurault, p. 12).

The Bush Negroes speak a lingua franca called taki-taki. This seems to be derived mainly from English, heavily mixed with African linguistic elements, and some Dutch and Portuguese words. In addition, the Saramacca are said to have a tribal language of their own called Saramacca tongo, which contains many African words but is essentially Negro-Portuguese, with a sprinkling of English and Dutch words (cf. 1: Herskovits and Herskovits, p. 345; 2: Kahn, pp. 161, 164; 6: Hurault, pp. 2, 12).

Each Bush Negro tribe has some degree of political unity, and could be classified as a chiefdom. There is a paramount chief called the granman or "grand man," who is assisted by a tribal council composed of the heads of the principal component matrilineal sibs. Generally, however, persons in these political offices exercise little temporal power. For example, among the Saramacca, broad policy issues or disputes between villages are brought before the granman and his council, but a village or group of neighboring villages belonging to the same matrilineal sib have a high degree of autonomy in governing their affairs (1: Herskovits and Herskovits, p. 190). As for the Boni, Hurault stresses that whatever authority the tribal officials have is religiously based. Thus the grand man of the Boni is believed to have special power over the spirits of the dead. He holds audiences of consultation and can use persuasion, but his effectiveness depends on his prestige and the people's religious beliefs. "In fact, the society of the Refugee Blacks has not elaborated true political institutions; it is essentially a grouping for collective defense against supernatural perils. The council, like the grand man, has power and authority only insofar as it remains closely bound to this function" (6: Hurault, pp. 99, 100, 103, 106).

Within each tribe the population clusters into a number of main residential or "great" villages, with those of the Djuka and Saramacca averaging some hundreds of inhabitants. The core of each village is formed by one or more matrilineages, and the head of the dominant matrilineage also functions as the village chief, assisted by a council. Subsistence is based on shifting cultivation, but some cash income used to be earned from Europeans and Creoles through the provision of transportation services on the rivers and by selling lumber. These sources of income have mostly disappeared, and nowadays many young Bush Negroes leave their villages to work as migrant laborers in the city of Paramaribo or elsewhere (cf. 6: Hurault, p. 13; Kobben 1967: 35).

Six sources have been processed for this file, two in English, two translations from Netherlandish, and two translations from French. These sources relate to the four principal tribal divisions previously listed as follows:

Sources	Tribes: Saramacca	Djuka	Boni	Paramacca
1: Herskovits & Hersko.	X			
2: Kahn	X	X	X	X
3: Coster		(X)?		
4: Geijskes		X		X
5: Hurault			X	
6: Hurault			X	

2: Kahn is a popularized account by a physician of the Bush Negroes in general, covering history, customs, and social life. Much useful information is presented, since this account is based on field data gathered by Kahn over the course of an eight-year period, 1922-1930. A potential source of confusion is his unfortunate use of the term "Djuka" as a generic name for the Bush Negroes, rather than as the name of a particular tribe.

3: Coster is the earliest source, dating from the author's residence in Surinam from about 1851 to about 1865. He seems to have had good business and personal relations with the Bush Negroes, and in this article he provides some interesting although miscellaneous cultural data. Most of the data probably pertain to the Djuka, but Coster never specifies the tribal provenience.

4: Geijskes is an article by a biologist based on field work in 1952 among both the Djuka and Paramacca. He focuses on a detailed analysis of patterns and problems of agricultural land utilization. Included is a valuable inventory of cultivated plants and some useful wild plants.

1: Herskovits and Herskovits is one of the two main sources in this file, and is written by a well-known professional anthropologist and his wife. The Herskovits did field work among the Saramacca for two summers in 1928 and 1929. Their book presents a general coverage of Saramacca culture, with greatest concentration on religion and the tribal assembly or council called krutu. But, as the authors themselves state, this book does not constitute a technically adequate basic ethnography. "The situations to which we have given emphasis are those which have a direct bearing upon the beliefs and practices of Negro people wherever they are found today.

but they are presented as they would - and did - actually occur among the Saramacca people" (pp. xii-xiii).

6: Hurault is the major source in this file, and consititues a very good basic ethnography of the Boni, with emphasis on demography, social organization, and the magico-religious system. Hurault is a French human geographer who has become the foremost authority on the Boni, among whom he has made seven field trips between 1948 and 1959.

Finally, 5: Hurault is an article analyzing and comparing some demographic characteristics of the Boni and the neighboring Oyana Indians (SR12). This is a very interesting study of a sort of natural biological experiment, since it involves two entirely distinct ethnic groups living side by side, with the same general way of life and diet, yet with striking differences in their basic demographic patterns and trends.

As this file now stands, the Boni are the only tribe with adequate ethnographic coverage. But several Dutch anthropologists, led by A.J.F. Kobben, have done extended field work among the Djuka in the 1960s. When their work becomes fully available, the Djuka will probably be the best described Bush Negro tribe.]

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